



A BRIEF  
RECOGNITION  
OF  
NEW-ENGLANDS  
ERRAND  
INTO THE  
Wilderness;

Made in the Audience of the General Assembly of the  
*Massachusetts Colony, at Boston in N. E. on the*  
11<sup>th</sup> of the third Moneth, 1670. being the  
DAY of ELECTION  
T H E R E.

By *Samuel Danforth*, Pastor of the Church of  
Christ in *Roxbury in N. E.*

- Jer. 2. 2. Go, and cry in the ears of *Jerusalem*, saying. Thus saith the Lord, I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after me in the wilderness, in a Land that was not sown.
3. *Israel* was Holiness unto the Lord, and the first-fruits of his increase—
5. Thus saith the Lord, What iniquity have your fathers found in me, that they are gone far from me, and have walked after vanity, and are become vain?

C A M B R I D G E :

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RECOGNITION

(20)

ERRATA

Wilderners;

DAY OF ELECTION

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By James P. ...

(Printed in ...)

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Christian Reader,

**A** Word spoken in due season (*saith Solomon*) how good is it? *Prov. 15. 23.* And again, A word fitly spoken is like Apples of gold in pictures of silver, *Chap. 25. 11.* Such were the words of our Lord *Iesus*, who (accommodating himself to the way of Doctrine used by those Eastern Nations) did by Parabolical discourses delight to breathe forth the deep Mysteries of divine and heavenly wisdom: And how plain, but pungent, his Sermons were, how perspicuous, yet unspeakably profound were those Oracles which flowed out of his lips of grace, none are ignorant, who are not unacquainted with what the holy Evangelists do harmoniously relate concerning him. No more excellent Pattern then the Lord *Iesus* for the Ministry of the New Testament to imitate: And of all the words of the Sacred Scripture (though all are of equal Authority, as being of the Canon, yet) none seem to have a more eminent immediation of Heart-commanding virtue, then those which proceeded directly out of the mouth of the Lord himself; whereof this Text is one, upon which the following Sermon is spent. And how much of the Spirit of our Saviour appears therein, I need not say, and which perhaps will not, at the first dash, be discerned by the ordinary or cursory Reader; but Wisdom is justified of her children. The seasonableness, and suitableness of this Work which is now in thine hand, unto our present Wilderness-state, will commend it self unto the judicious Christian, whose heart doth indeed travel with the labouring Interest of the Kingdom of our Lord *Iesus* in these Ends of the Earth: The Text carrying with it so much heavenly argumentation, being so profitable for Doctrine, for Reproof, for Correction, for Instruction in righteousness, as though intended by our Lord *Iesus* for such a Day as that, whereon this Sermon was Preached, (and also before such an Auditory). Whoso applauds the former, will not disapprove the latter; the Reverend Author thereof



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thereof observing therein the Saying of that Apostolick Man of God (and very judicious in his Advice to younger Ministers about such matters) his most Reverend Father of blessed Memory, Mr. Wilson, viz. That he delighted in such a Sermon wherein the Preacher kept close unto his Text, and the proper scope thereof, and wandered not from it by needless excursions, and impertinent enlargements.

The loss of first love, first to Christ, and so to the Subjects, and Order of his Kingdome, being a Radical Disease too tremendously growing upon so great a part of the Body of Professors in this Land, unto a Laodicean lukewarmness in the matters of God, notwithstanding the signal, and unparallel Experiences of the blessing of God upon this people, a people so often saved by the Lord in the Way of Moses and Aaron's meeting, and kissing one another in the Mount of God; and the observation of that Declension justly calling for so meet an Antidote and faithful Caution, as is the ensuing Sermon (*οὐκ ἐστὶν ἀνδρὶς ἀνδρωτέρως σοφίας λόγους, ἀλλ' ἐστὶ ἀποδείξαι Πνεύματος καὶ συνειδήσεως*) unto such, to review, and consider in earnest their Errand into this Wilderness: and the recovery of their affections to the Name of Christ, in the chastity, vigour, and fervour thereof, by a thorough-Reformation of things in the Matters of his Worship, being a special duty in this hour of Temptation incumbent, as on the Magistracy in their Sphere, so on the Ministry in theirs, whereby they may declare themselves loyal to Christ in their Generation-work, hath no doubt inclined the heart of this Servant of his, to yield unto the Perswasions of divers, that these his Meditations might be published, and so (through the blessing of God) advance that desired Reformation. It is not a loose Toleration, nor a rigid Independent-Separation, but an holy, and brotherly Reformation which all should in such an hour be endeavouring. And how perillous a Sceptical Indifferency, or a Reed like Vacillation, much more wilful Opposition to the Doctrine and Way of the first Fathers and Founders of this Colony in Matters of Religion, would be, were it onely in those two Points about the Magistrates Coercive Power in Matters of Religion, (contrary to that Toleration aforesaid) and about Communion of Churches in Synods, &c. described also by them, from the Word  
of

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of God, in the Platform of Discipline (contrary to that Independent-Separation aforesaid) will be evident to those that understand what these things mean; scil. 1. Quod liberi sunt Spirituales & jugo potestatis secularis: and 2. Quod Ecclesia non potest errare. It is said I remember (Josh. 24. 31.) that Israel served the Lord all the dayes of Joshua, and all the dayes of the Elders that out-lived Joshua, and which had known all the works of the Lord that he had done for Israel: It is much to Israels advantage in the service of God, when the Lord graciously continues those, who are acquainted with the First Wayes of such a people, as hath been Holiness to the Lord, and with the First Works of the Lord in his laying the Foundation of that Glory which might dwell in their Land. And it is recorded (Exod. 1. 8.) as an inlet to Israels calamitous state, in that place where the Lord had greatly multiplied and blessed them, that there arose up a New King which knew not Joseph. When Joseph, or Joshua are unknown, or forgotten, and the Work and Way of God in leading his people by the hand of Moses and Aaron in their primitive Glory not understood, or not minded by these or those, how fearfully ominous to Israel must it needs be! and how necessitating the affectionate repetition, again, and again, of that expostulatory, sad Interrogation of our Saviour, But what went ye out into the Wilderness to see? And should there arise such another Generation (as is mentioned Judg. 2. 11.) after our Fathers are removed to rest from the warfare of the service of the Tabernacle of God in their Generation, as should not know the Lord, nor regard the works which he hath done for our Israel, what may be expected, but that (as the following Context shews) the anger of the Lord should wax hot against Israel, and that he deliver us also into the hand of spoilers? &c. Strangers to the FIRST Intention of the people of God in their planting in this Wilderness, and so to the Doctrine of Faith and Order left in Print behinde them (more sure and credible then some Unwritten Traditions thereabout) may prove dangerous Instruments to OUR Ruine, if the Lord in mercy prevent not.

It was the commendation of Timothy by Paul, 2 Tim. 3. 10, 11. as also a profitable instruction and encouragement to him, when he saith, But thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life,

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purpose, faith, long-suffering, charity, patience, persecutions, afflictions which came unto me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra, what persecutions I endured, but out of them all the Lord delivered me: the like may be said of this Reverend Servant of the Lord, my dear Brother in Christ, to whom it hath seemed good *κατανοήσας ἀνδρὶ ᾧ οὖν ἀρετῆς* (according to that word of Wisdom which is given to him by that same holy Spirit, from whom proceed those diversities of gifts, which he divides to every man severally as he will) to leave this ensuing Testimony of his sollicitude for the poor Woman fled also into this Wilderness, unto the consideration of all such as are wise-hearted in Israel. His nearness to, and intimacy with my Ever-honoured Father now with God (he being brought up with him as a Son with a Father) commands from my Pen a glad apprehending the opportunity of performing this service of waiting upon it to the Press, praying, that the Lord would make the words thereof as Goats, and Nails fastened by the Masters of Assemblies, and given by that one Shepherd the Lord Jesus: In Whom I am

Thine, for the service of thy Faith,

*Thomas Shepard.*

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A BRIEF



A BRIEF  
RECOGNITION  
OF  
*New-Englands* Errand into the  
WILDERNESS.

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Matth. 11. 7, 8, 9.

*—What went ye out into the wilderness to see? A reed  
shaken with the wind?*

*But what went ye out for to see? A man clothed in soft  
raiment? behold, they that wear soft clothing, are in  
Kings houses.*

*But what went ye out-for to see? A Prophet? yea, I say  
unto you, and more then a Prophet.*

**T**Hese words are our Saviour's *Proem* to his illustrious Encomium of *John the Baptist*. *John* began his Ministry, not in *Jerusalem*, nor in any famous City of *Judea*, but in the *Wilderness*, i. e. in a woody, retired and solitary place, thereby withdrawing himself from the envy and preposterous zeal of such as were addicted to their old Traditions, and also taking the people aside from the noise and tumult of their secular occasions and businesses, which might have obstructed their ready and cheerful attendance unto his Doctrine. The Ministry of *John* at first was entertained by all sorts with singular affection: There went out to him *Jerusalem* and all *Judea*, and all the region round about *Jordan*, Mat. 3. 5. but after awhile, the people's fervour abated, and

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and *John* being kept under restraint divers moneths, his authority and esteem began to decay and languish, *John* 5. 35. Wherefore our Saviour, taking occasion from *Johns* Messengers coming to him, after their departure, gives an excellent *Elogie* and Commendation of *John*, to the intent that He might ratifie and confirm his Doctrine and Administration, and revive his Authority and Estimation in the hearts and consciences of the people.

This *Elogie* our Saviour begins with an elegant *Dialogism*, which the Rhetorician calleth *Communication*: gravely deliberating with his Hearers, and seriously enquiring to what purpose they went out into the Wilderness, and what expectation drew them thither. Wherein we have, 1. *The general Question, and main subject of his Inquisition.* 2. *The particular Enquiries.* 3. *The Determination of the Question.*

The general Question is, *What went ye out into the Wilderness to see?* He saith not, Whom went ye out to hear, but what went ye out to see? *Quidnam?* The phrase agrees to Shows and Stage-plays; plainly arguing that many of those, who seemed well-affected to *John*, and flock'd after him, were *Theatrical* Hearers, *Spectators* rather than *Auditors*; they went not to hear, but to see; they went to gaze upon a new and strange Spectacle.

This general Question being propounded, the first particular Enquiry is, whether they went to see *A reed shaken with the wind?* The expression is Metaphorical and Proverbial. A reed when the season is calm, lifts up it self and stands upright, but no sooner doth the wind blow upon it, but it shakes and trembles, bends and bows down, and then gets up again: and again it yields and bows, and then lifts up it self again. A notable *Emblem* of light, empty and inconstant persons, who in times of peace and tranquillity, give a fair and plausible Testimony to the Truth; but no sooner do the winds of Temptation blow upon them, and the waves of Troubles roll over them, but they incline and yield to the prevailing Party: but when the Tempest is over, they recover themselves and assert the Truth again. The meaning then of this first Enquiry is, Went ye out  
into

into the Wilderness to see a light, vain and inconstant man, one that could confess and deny, and deny and confess the same Truth? This Interrogation is to be understood negatively and ironically; *q. d.* Surely ye went not into the desert to behold such a ludicrous and ridiculous sight, *A man like unto a reed shaken with the wind.* Under the negation of the contrary levity, our Saviour sets forth one of *John's* excellencies, *viz.* his eminent *Constancy* in asserting the Truth. The winds of various temptations both on the right hand and on the left, blew upon him, yet he wavered not in his testimony concerning Christ, *He confessed and denied not, but confessed the truth.*

Then the general Question is repeated, *But what went ye out for to see?* and a second particular Enquiry made, *Was it to see a man clothed in soft raiment?* This Interrogation hath also the force of a negation, *q. d.* Surely ye went not into the Wilderness to see a man clothed in silken and costly Apparel. The reason of this is added, *Behold, they that wear soft clothing, are in Kings houses.* Delicate and costly Apparel is to be expected in Princes Courts, and not in wilde Woods and Forrests. Under the negation of *John's* affectation of Courtly delicacy, our Saviour sets forth another of *John's* excellencies, *viz.* his singular *gravity* and *sobriety*, who wore rough garments, and lived on course and mean fare, *Mat. 3. 4.* which austere kinde of life was accommodated to the place and work of his Ministry. *John* Preached in the Wilderness, which was no fit place for silken and soft raiment. His work was to prepare a people for the Lord, by calling them off from worldly pomp and vanities, unto repentance and mourning for sin. His peculiar habit and diet was such as became a penitentiary Preacher.

Thirdly, the generall Question is reiterated, *But what went ye out for to see?* and a third particular Enquiry made, *Was it to see a Prophet?* This Interrogation is to be understood affirmatively, *q. d.* no doubt but it was to see a *Prophet.* Had not *John* been a rare and excellent Minister of God, you would never have gone out of your Cities into the desert to have seen him. Thus our Saviour sets forth another of *John's* admirable excellencies, *viz.* his *Prophetical* Office and Function. *John*



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was not an ordinary Interpreter of the Law, much less a Teacher of Jewish Traditions, but a Prophet, one who by the extraordinary Inspiration of the holy Ghost, made known the Mysteries of Salvation, *Luke 1. 76, 77.*

Lastly, our Saviour determines and concludes the Question, He, whom ye went out to see was *more then a Prophet*, *yet witness requireth, much more, or abundantly more then a Prophet.* This he confirms by his wonted Asseveration, *Yea, I say unto you*, and much more then a Prophet. How was John much more then a Prophet? John was Christ's Herald sent immediately before his face, to proclaim his Coming and Kingdome, and prepare the people for the reception of him by the Baptism of Repentance, *ver. 10.* Hence it follows *ver. 11.* *Among all that are born of women, there hath not risen a greater Prophet then John.* John was greater then any of the Prophets that were before him, not in respect of his personal graces and virtues, (for who shall perswade us that he excelled Abraham in the grace of Faith, who was the father of the faithful, or Moses in Meekness, who was the meekest man on earth, or David in Faithfulness, who was a man after Gods own heart, or Solomon in Wisdom, who was the wisest man that ever was or shall be?) but in respect of the manner of his dispensation. All the Prophets foretold Christs Coming, his Sufferings and Glory, but the Baptist was his Harbinger and Forerunner, that bare the Sword before him, Proclaimed his Presence, and made room for him in the hearts of the people. All the Prophets saw Christ afar off, but the Baptist saw him present, baptized him, and applied the Types to him personally. Behold the Lamb of God, He saw and bare record that this is the Son of God, *Joh. 1. 29, 34.* But he that is least in the Kingdome of Heaven, is greater then John. The least Prophet in the Kingdome of Heaven, i.e. the least Minister of the Gospel since Christ's Ascension, is greater then John; not in respect of the measure of his personal gifts, nor in respect of the manner of his Calling, but in respect of the Object of his Ministry, Christ on the Throne, having finished the work of our Redemption, and in respect of the degree of the revelation of Christ, which is far more clear and full. John shewed

shewed Christ in the flesh, and pointed to him with his finger, but the Ministers of the Gospel declare that he hath done and suffered all things necessary to our Salvation, and is risen again and set down at the right hand of God.

*Doct. Such as have sometime left their pleasant Cities and Habitations to enjoy the pure Worship of God in a Wilderness, are apt in time to abate and cool in their affection thereunto: but then the Lord calls upon them seriously and thoroughly to examine themselves, what it was that drew them into the Wilderness, and to consider that it was not the expectation of ludicrous levity, nor of Courtly pomp and delicacy, but of the free and clear dispensation of the Gospel and Kingdome of God.*

This Doctrine consists of two distinct Branches; let me open them severally.

*Branch 1. Such as have sometime left their pleasant Cities and Habitations, to enjoy the pure Worship of God in a Wilderness, are apt in time to abate and cool in their affection thereunto. To what purpose did the Children of Israel leave their Cities and Houses in Egypt, and go forth into the Wilderness? was it not to hold a Feast to the Lord, and to sacrifice to the God of their fathers? That was the onely reason, which they gave of their motion to Pharaoh, Exod. 5. 1, 3. but how soon did they forget their Errand into the Wilderness, and corrupt themselves in their own Inventions? within a few moneths after their coming out of Egypt, they make a Calf in Horeb, and worship the molten Image, and change their glory into the similitude of an Ox that eateth grass, Psal. 106. 19, 20. Exod. 32. 7, 8. yea for the space of forty years in the Wilderness, while they pretended to Sacrifice to the Lord, they indeed worshipped the Stars and the Host of Heaven, and together with the Lords Tabernacle, carried about with them the Tabernacle of Moloch, Amos 5. 25, 26. Acts 7. 42, 43. And how did they spend their time in the Wilderness, but in tempting God, and in murmuring against their godly and faithful Teachers and Rulers, Moses and Aaron? Psal. 95. 8. To what purpose did the Children of the Captivity upon Cyrus his Proclamation, leave their Houses which they had built, and their Vineyards*

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and Oliveyards which they had planted in the Province of *Babylon*, and return to *Judea* and *Jerusalem*, which were now become a Wilderness? was it not that they might build the House of God at *Jerusalem*, and set up the Temple-worship? But how shamefully did they neglect that great and honourable Work for the space of above forty years? They pretended that Gods time was not come to build his House, because of the rubs and obstructions which they met with; whereas all their difficulties and discouragements hindred not their building of stately houses for themselves, *Hag.* 1.2,3,4. To what purpose did *Jerusalem* & all *Judea*, & all the region round about *Jordan*, leave their several Cities and Habitations, and flock into the Wilderness of *Judea*? was it not to see that burning and shining light, which God had set up? To hear his heavenly Doctrine, and partake of that new Sacrament, which he administred? O how they were affected with his rare and excellent gifts! with his clear, lively and powerful Ministry! *The Kingdome of Heaven* pressed in upon them with a holy violence, and the violent, the zealous and affectionate hearers of the Gospel, took it by force, *Mat.* 11.12. *Luk.* 16.16. They leapt over all discouragements and impediments, whether outward, as Legal Rites and Ceremonies, or inward, the sense of their own sin and unworthiness, and pressed into the Kingdome of God, as men rush into a Theatre to see a pleasant Sight, or as Souldiers run into a besieged City, to take the Spoil thereof: but their hot fit is soon over, their affection lasted but for an hour, i.e. a short season, *Joh.* 5.35.

*Reas. 1.* Because the affection of many to the Ministry of the Gospel and the pure Worship of God, is built upon temporary and transitory grounds, as the novelty and strangeness of the matter, the rareness and excellency of Ministerial Gifts, the voice of the people, the countenance of great men, and the hope of worldly advantage. The Jews had lien in ignorance and darkness a long time, being trained up under the superstitious observances of their old traditions, which were vain, empty and unprofitable Customes. and the Church wanted the gift of Prophecy about four hundred years; and therefore when *John the Baptist* arose like a bright and burning light, shining amongst them with admirable



mirable gifts of the Spirit, and extraordinary severity and gravity of manners, proclaiming the Coming and Kingdome of the Messias, (which had been oft promised and long expected) and pressing the people to Repentance and good works; O how they admire and reverence him? especially; when grown popular, and countenanced by *Herod the Tetrarch*. What sweet affections are kindled! what great expectations are raised! what ravishing joy is conceived! Hoping (as its probable) to make use of his Authority to cast off the *Roman* yoke, and recover their Civil Liberties, Riches and Honours. But after a little acquaintance with *John*, (for he was a publick Preacher but a year and half) his Doctrine, Administrations and Prophetical Gifts, grew common and stale things, and of little esteem with them; especially, when they saw their carnal hopes frustrated, the Rulers disaffected, and *Herods* countenance and carriage toward him changed.

*Reas. 2.* Because *Prejudices* and *Offences* are apt to arise in the hearts of many against the *faithful Dispensers* of the Gospel. The *Pharisees* and *Lawyers* came among others to the Baptism of *John*, but when they hear his sharp reprehensions of their *Viperous* Opinions and Practices, they nauseate his Doctrine, repudiate his Baptism, calumniate his Conversation, *Luke 7.30.* *Herodias* hath an inward grudge and a quarrel against him, because he found fault with her incestuous Marriage, *Mat. 6. 19.* Yea, that very Age and Generation of the Jews, were like to a company of *furdy, fullen and froward children*, whom no Musick can please, they neither dance after the Pipe, nor make lamentation after the mourner. They inveigh against *John's* austerity, saying that he was transported with diabolical fury, and was an enemy to humane society: and they do as much distaste and abhor *Christ's* gentleness and familiarity, traducing him, as being a sensual and voluptuous person, given to intemperance and luxury, and a Patron and Abettor of looseness and profaneness, *Mat. 11. 16—19.* Thus doth the frowardness and stubbornness of man, resist and oppose the wisdom and goodness of God, who useth various wayes and instruments to compass poor sinners, but they through their folly and perverseness

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ness, frustrate, disanul and abrogate the counsel of God against themselves. The evil spirit that troubled *Sam*, was quieted and allayed by the sweet Melody of *David's* Harp: but the mad and outrageous fury that transports men against the Truth and the Ministry thereof, cannot be quieted and allayed by the voice of the Charmers, charm they never so wisely.

Branch II. *When men abate and cool in their affliction to the pure Worship of God, which they went into the Wilderness to enjoy, the Lord calls upon them seriously and thoroughly to examine themselves, what it was that drew them into the Wilderness, and to consider that it was not the expectation of ludicrous levity, nor of Courtly pomp and delicacy, but of the free and clear dispensation of the Gospel and Kingdome of God.* Our Saviour knowing that the people had lost their first love and singular affection to the revelation of his grace by the Ministry of his Herauld *John*, He is very intense in examining them, what expectation drew them into the Wilderness: He doth not once nor twice, but thrice propound that Question, *What went ye out into the Wilderness to see?* Yea, in particular he enquires whether it were to see a man that was like to a *Reed shaken with the wind?* or whether it were to see a man clothed like a Courtier, or whether it were to see a Prophet, and then determines the Question, concluding that it was to see a great and excellent Prophet, and that had not they seen rare and admirable things in him, they would never have gone out into the Wilderness unto him.

The Reason is, Because the serious consideration of the inestimable grace and mercy of God in the free and clear dispensation of the Gospel and Kingdome of God, is a special means to convince men of their folly and perverseness in undervaluing the same, and a sanctified remedy to recover their affections thereunto. The Lord foreseeing the defection of *Israel* after *Moses* his death, commands him to write that Prophetical Song, recorded in *Deut.* 32. as a Testimony against them: wherein the chief remedy, which he prescribes for the prevention and healing of their Apostacy, is their calling to remembrance Gods great and signal love in manifesting himself to them in the Wilderness, in conducting them safely and mercifully,

cifully, and giving them possession of their promised Inheritance, *ver. 7—14.* And when *Israel* was apostatized and fallen, the Lord to convince them of their ingratitude and folly, brings to their remembrance his deliverance of them out of *Egypt*, his leading them through the Wilderness for the space of forty years, and not onely giving them possession of their Enemies Land, but also raising up, even of their own Sons, *Prophets*, faithful and eminent Ministers, and of their young men *Nazarites*, who being separated from worldly delights and encumbrances, were Paterns of Purity and Holiness: all which were great and obliging mercies. Yea, the Lord appeals to their own Consciences, whether these his favours were not real and signal, *Amos 2.10,11.* The Prophet *Jeremiah*, that he might reduce the people from their backslidings, cries in the ears of *Jerusalem*, with earnestness and boldness declaring unto them, that the Lord remembered how well they stood affected towards him, when he first chose them to be his people and espoused them to himself, how they followed him in the Wilderness, and kept close to him in their long and wearisome passage through the uncultured Desert; how they were then consecrated to God, and set apart for his Worship and Service; as the first-fruits are wont to be sequestred and devoted to God: and thereupon expostulates with them for their forsaking the Lord, and following after their Idols, *Jer. 2. 2,3,5,6.* Surely our Saviour's *Dialogism* with his Hearers in my Text, is not a meer Rhetorical Elegancy to adorn his Testimony concerning *John*, but a clear and strong conviction of their folly in slighting and despising that which they sometime so highly pretended unto, and a wholesome admonition and direction how to recover their primitive affection to his Doctrine and Administration.

USE I. Of solemn and serious Enquiry to us all in this general Assembly, Whether we have not in a great measure forgotten our Errand into the Wilderness. You have solemnly professed before God, Angels and Men, that the Cause of your leaving your Country, Kindred and Fathers houses, and transporting your selves with your Wives, Little Ones

and



and Substance over the vast Ocean into this waste and howling Wilderness, was *your Liberty to walk in the Faith of the Gospel, with all good Conscience according to the Order of the Gospel, and your enjoyment of the pure worship of God according to his Institution, without humane Mixtures and Impositions.* Now let us sadly consider whether our ancient and primitive affections to the Lord Jesus, his glorious Gospel, his pure and Spiritual Worship and the Order of his House, remain, abide and continue firm, constant, entire and inviolate. Our Saviour's reiteration of this Question, *What went ye out into the Wilderness to see?* is no idle repetition, but a sad conviction of our dullness and backwardness to this great duty, and a clear demonstration of the weight and necessity thereof. It may be a grief to us to be put upon such an Inquisition; as it is said of Peter, Joh. 21. 17. *Peter was grieved, because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me?* but the Lord knoweth that a strict and rigid examination of our hearts in this point, is no more then necessary. Wherefore let us call to remembrance the former dayes, and consider whether *it was not then better with us, then it is now.*

In our first and best times the Kingdome of Heaven brake in upon us with a holy violence, and every man pressed into it. What mighty efficacy and power had the clear and faithful dispensation of the Gospel upon your hearts? how affectionately and zealously did you entertain the Kingdome of God? How careful were you, even all sorts, young and old, high and low, to take hold of the opportunities of your spiritual good and edification? ordering your secular affairs (which were wreathed and twisted together with great variety) so as not to interfere with your general Calling, but that you might *attend upon the Lord without distraction.* How diligent and faithful in preparing your hearts for the reception of the Word, *laying apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness,* that you might receive with meekness the ingrafted word, *which is able to save your souls;* and purging out all malice, guile, hypocrisies, envies, and all evil speakings, and as new-born babes, *desiring the sincere milk of the Word,* that ye might grow thereby? How attentive in hearing

hearing the everlasting Gospel, watching daily at the gates of Wisdome, and waiting at the posts of her doors, that ye might finde eternal life, and obtain favour of the Lord? Gleaning day by day in the field of Gods Ordinances, even among the Sheaves, and gathering up handfuls, which the Lord let fall of purpose for you, and at night going home and beating out what you had gleaned, by Meditation, Repetition, Conference, and therewith feeding your selves and your families. How painful were you in recollecting, repeating and discoursing of what you heard, whetting the Word of God upon the hearts of your Children, Servants and Neighbours? How fervent in Prayer to Almighty God for his divine Blessing upon the Seed sown, that it might take root and fructifie? O what a reverent esteem had you in those dayes of Christ's faithful Ambassadors, that declared unto you the Word of Reconciliation! How beautiful were the feet of them, that preached the Gospel of peace, and brought the glad tidings of Salvation! you esteemed them highly in love for their works sake. Their Persons, Names and Comforts were precious in your eyes; you counted your selves blessed in the enjoyment of a Pious, Learned and Orthodox Ministry: and though you ate the bread of adversity and drank the water of affliction, yet you rejoyced in this, that your eyes saw your Teachers, they were not removed into corners, and your ears heard a word behinde you, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it, when you turned to the right hand and when you turned to the left, *Isa* 30. 20, 21. What earnest and ardent desires had you in those dayes after Communion with Christ in the holy Sacraments? *With desire you desired* to partake of the Seals of the Covenant. You thought your Evidences for Heaven not sure nor authentick, unless the Broad-Seals of the Kingdome were annexed. What solicitude was there in those dayes to seek the Lord after the right Order? What searching of the holy Scriptures, what Collations among your Leaders, both in their private Meetings and publick Councils and Synods, to finde out the Order, which Christ hath constituted and established in his House? What fervent zeal was there then against Sectaries and Hereticks, and all manner of Heterodoxies? *You could*

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not bear them that were evil, but tried them that pretended to New Light and Revelations, and found them *liars*. What pious Care was there of *Sister Churches*, that those that wanted *Breasts*, might be supplied, and that those that wanted *Peace*, their Dissentions might be healed? What readiness was there in those dayes to call for the help of Neighbour-Elders and Brethren, in case of any Difference or Division that could not be healed at home? What reverence was there then of the Sentence of a Council, as being *decisive* and issuing the Controversie? According to that ancient Proverbial Saying, *They shall surely ask counsel at Abel, and so they ended the matter*, 2 Sam. 20.18. What holy Endeavours were there in those dayes to propagate Religion to your Children and Posterity, training them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, keeping them under the awe of government, restraining their enormities and extravagancies; charging them to know the God of their fathers, and serve him with a perfect heart and willing minde; and publickly asserting and maintaining their interest in the Lord and in his holy Covenant, and zealously opposing those that denied the same?

And then had the Churches *rest* throughout the several Colonies, and were *edified*; and *walking in the fear of the Lord*, and in the comfort of the holy Ghost, were *multiplied*. O how your Faith grew exceedingly! you proceeded from faith to faith, from a less to a greater degree and measure, growing up in Him, who is our Head, and receiving abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness, that you might reign in life by Jesus Christ. O how your Love and Charity towards each other abounded! O what comfort of Love! what bowels and mercies! what affectionate care was there one of another! what a holy Sympathy in Crosses and Comforts, weeping with those that wept, and rejoicing with those that rejoiced!

But who is there left among you, that saw these Churches in their first glory, and how do you see them now? Are they not in your eyes in comparison thereof, *as nothing*? How is the gold become dim! how is the most fine gold changed! Is not the Temper, Complexion and Countenance of the Churches strangely



strangely altered? Doth not a careless, remiss, flat, dry, cold, dead frame of spirit, grow in upon us secretly, strongly, prodigiously? They that have Ordinances, are as though they had none; and they that hear the Word, as though they heard it not; and they that pray, as though they prayed not; and they that receive Sacraments, as though they received them not; and they that are exercised in the holy things, using them by the by, as matters of custome and ceremony, so as not to hinder their eager prosecution of other things which their hearts are set upon. Yea and in some particular Congregations amongst us, is there not *in stead of a sweet smell, a stink? and in stead of a girdle, a rent? and in stead of a stomacher, a girding with sackcloth? and burning in stead of beauty? yea the Vineyard is all overgrown with thorns, and nettles cover the face thereof, and the stone wall thereof is broken down*, Prov. 24 31. yea, and that which is the most sad and certain sign of calamity approaching, *Iniquity aboundeth, and the love of many waxeth cold*, Mat. 24 12. Pride, Contention, Worldliness, Covetousness, Luxury, Drunkenness and Uncleanness break in like a flood upon us, and good men grow cold in their love to God and to one another. If a man be cold in his bed, let them lay on the more clothes, that he may get heat: but we are like to *David* in his old age; *they covered him with clothes, but he gat no heat*, 2 Sam. 1. 1. The Lord heaps mercies, favours, blessings upon us, and loads us daily with his benefits, but all his love and bounty cannot heat and warm our hearts and affections. Well, the furnace is able to heat and melt the coldest Iron: but how oft hath the Lord cast us into the hot furnace of Affliction and Tribulation, and we have been scorched and burnt, yet not melted, but hardened thereby, *Isa. 63. 17*. How long hath God kept us in the furnace day after day, moneth after moneth, year after year? but all our Afflictions, Crosses, Trials have not been able to keep our hearts in a warm temper.

Now let me freely deliberate with you, what may be the *Causes* and *Grounds* of such *decays* and *languishings* in our affections to, and estimation of that which we came into the Wilderness to enjoy? Is it because *there is no bread, neither is there*

any water, and our soul loatheth this light bread? Num. 21. 5. Our soul is dried away, and there is nothing at all, besides this *Manna*, before our eyes, Num. 13. 6. What, is *Manna* no bread? Is this Angelical food, light bread, which cannot satisfy, but starves the Soul? Doth our Soul loath the bread of Heaven? The Lord be merciful to us; The full soul loatheth the honey-comb, Prov. 27. 7.

What then is the cause of our decays and languishings? Is it because the Spirit of the Lord is straitned and limited in the dispensers of the Gospel, and hence our joyes and comforts are lessened and shortned? O thou that art named the house of *Jacobi*, is the Spirit of the Lord straitned? are those his doings? Do not my words do good to him that walketh uprightly? Mic. 2. 7. Surely it is not for want of fulness in the Spirit of God, that he withhold comforts and blessings from any; neither doth he delight in threatnings and judgements, but his words both promise and perform that which is good and comfortable to them that walk uprightly. The Spirit is able to enlarge it self unto the reviving and cheering of every man's heart; and that should we experience, did not our iniquity put a barre, 2 Cor. 6. 11, 12. O ye *Corinthians*, our mouth is open unto you, our heart is enlarged: *Ye are not straitned in us, but ye are straitned in your own bowels.* The Spirit of God dilateth and enlargeth the heart of the faithful Ministry for the good of the people; but many times the people are straitned in their own bowels, and cannot receive such a large portion, as the Lord hath provided for them. What then is the cause of our coolings, faintings and languishings? The ground and principal cause is our *Unbelief*: We believe not the Grace and Power of God in Christ. Where is that lively exercise of faith, which ought to be, in our attendance upon the Lord in his holy Ordinances? Christ came to *Nazareth* with his heart full of love and compassion, and his hands full of blessings to bestow upon his old Acquaintance and Neighbours, among whom he had been brought up, but their *Unbelief* restrained his tender mercies, and bound his Omnipotent hands, that he could not do any great or illustrious Miracle amongst them. Mat. 13. 58. Mark 6. 5, 6. He could do there no mighty

mighty work— and he marvelled because of their unbelief. Unbelief straitens the grace and power of Christ, and hinders the communication of divine favours and special mercies. The word preached profits not, when it is not mixed with faith in them that hear it, *Heb. 4. 2.* We may pray earnestly, but if we ask not in faith, how can we expect to receive any thing of the Lord? *7 am. 1. 6, 7.*

But though Unbelief be the principal, yet it is not the sole cause of our decayes and languishings: *Inordinate worldly Cares, predominant Lusts, and malignant Passions and Distempers* stifle and choak the Word, and quench our affections to the Kingdome of God, *Luke 8. 14.* The Manna was gathered early in the morning, when the Sun waxed hot, it melted, *Exod. 16. 21.* It was a fearful Judgement on *Dathan and Abiram*, that the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them up. How many Professors of Religion, are swallowed up alive by earthly affections? Such as escape the *Lime-pit of Pharisaical Hypocrisie*, fall into the *Coal-pit of Sadducean Atheism and Epicurism*. *Pharisaism and Sadduceism* do almost divide the Professing World between them. Some split upon the *Rock of affected ostentation of singular Piety and Holiness*, and others are drawn into the *Whirpool*, and perish in the *Gulf of Sensuality and Luxury*.

If any question how seasonable such a Discourse may be upon such a Day, as this; let him consider, *Hag. 2. 10—14.* In the four and twentieth day of the ninth moneth, in the second year of *Darius*, came the word of the Lord by *Haggai* the Prophet, saying, Thus saith the Lord of Hosts, Ask now the Priests concerning the law, saying, If one bear holy flesh in the skirt of his garment, and with his skirt do touch bread, or pottage, or wine, or oyl, or any meat, shall it be holy? And the Priests answered and said, No. Then said *Haggai*, If one that is unclean by a dead body, touch any of these, shall it be unclean? And the Priests answered and said, It shall be unclean. Then answered *Haggai* and said, So is this people, and so is this nation before me, saith the Lord; and so is every work of their hands, and that which they offer there is unclean. It was an high and great day, wherein



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the Prophet spake these words, and an holy and honourable Work, which the people were employed in. For this day they laid the Foundation of the Lords Temple, *ver. 18.* nevertheless, the Lord saw it necessary this very day to represent and declare unto them, the pollution and uncleanness both of their persons and of their holy Services, that they might be deeply humbled before God, and carry on their present Work more holily and purely. What was their uncleanness? Their eager pursuit of their private Interests, took off their hearts and affections from the affairs of the House of God. It seems they pleased themselves with this, that the Altar stood upon its Bases, and Sacrifices were daily offered thereon, and the building of the Temple was onely deferred untill a fit opportunity were afforded, free from disturbance and opposition: and having now gained such a season, they are ready to build the Temple: but the Lord convinceth them out of the Law, that their former negligence was not expiated by their daily Sacrifices, but the guilt thereof rendred both the *Nation* and this *holy and honourable work*, which they were about, *vile and unclean* in the sight of God. And having thus shewn them their spiritual uncleanness, he encourageth them to go on with the work in hand, the building of the Temple, promising them from *this day* to bless them, *ver. 18.*

**USE II.** Of Exhortation, To excite and stir us all up to attend and prosecute our Errand into the Wilderness. *To what purpose came we into this place, and what expectation drew us hither? Surely, not the expectation of ludicrous Levity. We came not hither to see a Reed shaken with the wind. Then let not us be Reeds, light, empty, vain, hollow-hearted Professors, shaken with every wind of Temptation: but solid, serious and sober Christians, constant and stedfast in the Profession and Practice of the Truth, Trees of Righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he may be glorified, holding fast the profession of our Faith without wavering.*

*Alas, there is such variety and diversity of Opinions and Judgements, that we know not what to believe.*

Were there not as various and different Opinions touching  
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the Person of Christ, even in the dayes of his flesh? Some said that He was *John the Baptist*, some *Elias*, others *Jeremias*, or one of the old *Prophets*. Some said he was a gluttonous man, and a wine-bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners: others said He was a *Samaritan*, and had a Devil; yet the Disciples knew what to believe. *Whom say ye that I am? Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God*, Mat. 16. 15, 16. The various heterodox Opinions of the people, serve as a foil or tinctured leaf to set off the lustre and beauty of the Orthodox and Apostolical Faith. This is truly commendable, when in such variety and diversity of Apprehensions, you are not byassed by any sinister respects, but discern, embrace and profess the Truth, as it is in Christ Jesus.

*But to what purpose came we into the wilderness, and what expectation drew us hither?* Not the expectation of *Courtly Pomp and Delicacy*. We came not hither to see men clothed like *Courtiers*. The affectation of Courtly Pomp and Gallantry, is very unsuitable in a Wilderness. Gorgeous Attire is comely in Princes Courts, if it exceed not the limits of Christian Sobriety: but excess in Kings houses, escapes not divine Vengeance. Zeph. 1. 8. — *I will punish the Princes and the Kings children, and all such as are clothed with strange Apparel*. The pride and haughtiness of the Ladies of Zion in their superfluous Ornaments and stately gestures, brought wrath upon themselves, upon their Husbands, and upon their Children, yea and upon the whole Land, Isa. 3. 16—26. How much more intolerable and abominable is excess of this kinde in a Wilderness, where we are so far removed from the Riches and Honours of Princes Courts?

*To what purpose then came we into the wilderness, and what expectation drew us hither?* Was it not the expectation of the pure and faithful Dispensation of the Gospel and Kingdome of God? The times were such that we could not enjoy it in our own Land: and therefore having obtained Liberty and a gracious Patent from our Sovereign, we left our Country, Kindred and Fathers houses, and came into these wilde Woods and Deserts, where

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where the Lord hath planted us, and made us dwell in a place of our own, that we might move no more, and that the children of wickedness might not afflict us any more, 2 Sam. 7. 10. What is it that distinguisheth New-England from other Colonies and Plantations in America? Not our transportation over the Atlantick Ocean, but the Ministry of Gods faithful Prophets, and the fruition of his holy Ordinances. Did not the Lord bring the Philistims from Caphtor, and the Assyrians from Kir, as well as Israel from the land of Egypt? Amos 9. 7. But by a Prophet the Lord brought Israel out of Egypt, and by a Prophet was he preserved, Hos. 12. 13. What, is the Price and Esteem of Gods Prophets, and their faithful Dispensations, now fallen in our hearts?

The hardships, difficulties and sufferings, which you have exposed your selves unto, that you might dwell in the House of the Lord, and leave your Little Ones under the shadow of the wings of the God of Israel, have not been few nor small. And shall we now withdraw our selves and our Little Ones from under those healing wings, and lose that full Reward, which the Lord hath in his heart and hand to bestow upon us? Did we not with Mary choose this for our Part, to sit at Christs feet and hear his word? and do we now repent of our choice, and prefer the Honours, Pleasures and Profits of the world before it? You did run well: who doth hinder you, that you should not obey the truth? Gal. 5. 7.

Hath the Lord been wanting to us, or failed our expectation? Micah 6. 3. O my people, what have I done unto thee, and wherein have I wearied thee? testify against me. Jer. 2. 5. What iniquity have your fathers found in me, that they are gone far from me? and ver. 31. O generation, see ye the word of the Lord: have I been a wilderness unto Israel? a land of darkness? May not the Lord say unto us, as Pharaoh did to Hadad, 1 King. 11. 22. What hast thou lacked with me, that behold, thou seekest so to go to thine own Country? Nay, what could have been done more, then what the Lord hath done for us? Isa. 5. 4.

How sadly hath the Lord testified against us, because of our  
loss



loss of our first love, and our remissness and negligence in his Work? Why hath the Lord smitten us with Blasting and Mildew now seven years together, superadding sometimes severe Drought, sometimes great Tempests, Floods, and sweeping Rains, that leave no food behinde them? Is it not because the Lords House lyeth waste? Temple-work in our Hearts, Families, Churches is shamefully neglected? What should I make mention of *Signes* in the Heavens and in the Earth, *Blazing-Stars*, *Earthquakes*, dreadful *Thunders* and *Lightnings*, fearful *Burnings*? What meaneth the heat of his great Anger, in calling home so many of his *Ambassadors*? In plucking such burning and shining *Lights* out of the *Candlesticks*; the principal *Stakes* out of our Hedges; the *Corner-stones* out of our Walls? In removing such faithful *Shepherds* from their Flocks, and breaking down our *defenced Cities*, *Iron Pillars*, and *Brazen-Walls*? Seemeth it a small thing unto us, that so many of Gods *Prophets* (whose Ministry we came into the Wilderness to enjoy) are taken from us in so short a time? Is it not a Sign that God is making a way for his Wrath, when he removes his *Chosen* out of the Gap? Doth he not threaten us with a *Famine* of the Word, the *Scattering* of the Flock, the *Breaking* of the *Candlesticks*, and the turning of the *Songs* of the Temple into *howlings*?

It is high time for us to remember whence we are fallen, and repent, and do our first works. Wherefore let us lift up the hands that hang down, and strengthen the feeble knees, and make straight paths for our feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way, but let it rather be healed, Heb. 12. 12, 13. Labour we to redress our Faintings and Swervings, and address our selves to the Work of the Lord. Let us arise and build, and the Lord will be with us, and from this day will he bless us,

Alas, we are feeble and impotent; our hands are withered, and our strength dried up.

Remember the man that had a withered hand: Christ

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saith

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saith unto him, *Stretch forth thy hand; and he stretched it forth, and it was restored whole, like as the other,* Mat. 12. 13. How could he stretch forth his hand, when it was withered, the Blood and Spirits dried up, and the Nerves and Sinews shrunk up? The Almighty Power of Christ accompanying his Command, enabled the man to stretch forth his withered hand, and in stretching it forth, restored it whole, like as the other. Where the Sovereignty of Christ's Command takes place in the Conscience, there is effectual grace accompanying it to the healing of our Spiritual Feebleness and Impotency, and the enabling of us to perform the duty incumbent on us. Though we have no might, no strength, yet at Christ's Command, make an essay. Where the word of a King is, there is power.

*But alas, our Bruise is incurable and our Wound grievous, there is none to repair the Breach, there is no healing Medicine.*

The Lord Jesus, the great Physician of Israel, hath undertaken the Cure. *I will restore health unto thee, and I will heal thee of thy wounds, saith the Lord,* Jer. 30. 17. No case is to be accounted desperate or incurable, which Christ takes in hand. If he undertake to heal *Jairus* his daughter, he will have her death esteemed but a sleep, in reference to his power. *She is not dead, but sleepeth,* Mat. 9. 24. When Christ came to *Lazarus* his grave, and bade them take away the stone, *Martha* saith, *Lord, by this time he stinketh; for he hath been dead four dayes:* But Christ answereth, *Said I not unto thee, that if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God?* Joh. 11. 40. Let us give glory to God by believing his word, and we shall have real and experimental manifestations of his glory for our good and comfort.

*But alas, our hearts are sadly prejudiced against the Means and Instruments, by which we might expect that Christ should cure and heal us.*

Were not the hearts of *John's Disciples* leavened with carnal emulation and prejudices against *Christ himself*? They would

would not own him to be the Messiah, nor believe their Master's Testimony concerning him: insomuch that the Lord saw it necessary that *John* should decrease and be abased, that *Christ* might increase and be exalted: and therefore suffered *Herod* to shut up *John* in Prison, and keep him in durance about twelve moneths, and at length to cut off his head, that so these fondlings might be weaned from their Nurse; and when *John* was dead, his Disciples resort to *Jesus*, acquaint him with the calamity that befell them, and were perfectly reconciled to him, passing into his School, and becoming his Disciples, *Mat. 14. 12.*

*But alas, the Times are difficult and perillous; the Wind is stormy, and the Sea tempestuous; the Vessel heaves and sets, and tumbles up and down in the rough and boisterous waters, and is in danger to be swallowed up.*

Well, remember that the Lord sitteth upon the flood, yea the Lord sitteth King for ever, *Psal. 29. 10.* His way is in the sea, and his path in the great waters, and his footsteps are not known, *Psal. 77. 19.* He stilleth the noise of the seas, the noise of their waves, and the tumult of the people, *Psal. 65. 7.* He saith to the raging Sea, Peace, be still; and the wind ceaseth, and there is a great calm, *Mark 4. 39.* Yes, he can enable his people to tread and walk upon the waters. To sail and swim in the waters, is an easie matter; but to walk upon the waters, as upon a pavement, is an act of wonder. *Peter* at *Christ's* call came down out of the ship and walked on the water to go to *Jesus*, *Matth. 14. 29.* and as long as his Faith held, it upheld him from sinking; when his Faith failed, his body sunk: but he cried to the Lord, and he stretched forth his hand and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?

*But what shall we do for bread? The increase of the field and the labour of the Husbandman fails.*

Hear *Christ's* answer to his Disciples, when they were troubled, because there was but one Loaf in the ship. O ye of little faith, why reason ye, because you have no bread?